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Ideas and Change in U.S. Foreign Aid: Inventing the Millennium Challenge Corporation

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Recent scholarship on foreign policy change focuses on the role of ideas in altering policies and related governing institutions. While a welcome antidote to the previous preoccupation with static analysis, this research has yet to provide adequate understanding of whether and how ideas produce change in specific instances. This study seeks to narrow this gap by examining a recent program change in U.S. foreign aid policy: the creation in 2004 of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an independent agency designed to reward the world's most impoverished countries that had previously undertaken neoliberal economic reforms and democratic political reforms. The study identifies a convergence of widely shared principled and causal beliefs which, mediated through U.S. domestic structures, produced the most significant change in U.S. aid strategy and structures in nearly half a century. In melding societal theories that emphasize the role of transnational norm diffusion with theories of domestic politics, the study answers the call for multilevel explanations of foreign policy change. And by applying constructivist notions of ideas and discursive framing with rationalist conceptions of power and interests, the study further responds to the need for theoretical synthesis in the study of foreign policy.

> The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else… I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.
>
> John Maynard Keynes (1936:383)

The process of foreign policy change has rightly captured the attention of scholars in recent years. This attention is warranted not simply because of the accelerating pace of change, but also because of the lack of theoretical understanding that prevailed when static patterns of state behavior preoccupied researchers in earlier periods. Of particular concern is the role of ideas in fomenting changes in both the conduct of foreign policy and in the institutional arrangements that codify and perpetuate these changes. While our theoretical understanding of idea-infused change has grown considerably in the past two decades, much remains to be learned about the nature of these ideas and their structural manifestation in specific instances.

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This study addresses this deficiency in the study of foreign policy change by examining the impact of principled and causal beliefs, two ideational streams identified by Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (1993), on U.S. foreign policy. The first set of beliefs rests upon values, identities, and ''standards of appropriateness'' in world politics (March and Olsen 1998). The second set stems from scientifically grounded empirical claims regarding cause and effect. While either set of beliefs may stimulate the rethinking of policies and programs, together they create a catalyst for change that may have long-term consequences for foreign policy.

Such a convergence of principled and causal beliefs recently led U.S. leaders to undertake change in a vital area of foreign policy: the provision of foreign assistance. Specifically, the U.S. President George W. Bush administration embraced development aid both as a moral imperative and as a means of accelerating economic growth in carefully selected developing countries.[1] The new aid program, announced in March 2002, sought to ''transform'' international development by rewarding poor countries that previously had undertaken market-based economic reforms and democratic political reforms. Toward this end, the White House created a Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) whose aid would be limited to ''top performers'' in implementing such reforms. The president's decision to locate the MCA within a new and independent agency, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), prompted the most significant structural change in U.S. foreign aid since the passage of the Foreign Assistance Act in 1961.

This change cannot be understood solely from the standpoint of U.S. geopolitical interests, which were served by other aid programs. Nor can the change be attributed to the material demands of domestic interest groups, since aid from the new program could not be tied to the provision of U.S. goods and services. Finally, bureaucratic politics provide a poor explanation for the MCC's creation as the outcome was driven by the White House and represented a vote of ''no confidence'' in the dominant agencies in this policy area. Given the many disincentives for innovation in this case, why did the United States government take this turn in the strategy and structure of foreign aid? And what, more generally, does this tell us about foreign policy change?

Answers to these questions can be found in the power of ideas as independent agents of change. Ideas reflect widely held normative values as well as functional assumptions regarding social problems and the capacity of public policies to solve them. In this respect ideas play an exogenous role in public policies which cannot be understood solely as a by-product of material preferences. Ideas occasionally provoke political change, but more often they preserve the status quo (Krasner 1993). In either case, prevalent ideas, once embedded in government institutions, narrow the range of future policy options and outcomes (Sikkink 1991). State actions, in this respect, are considerably path dependent, as even modest changes to structural arrangements have enduring consequences (Pierson 2000).

While necessary, grasping such ideas is not sufficient to explain this case. Also to be considered is the nature of U.S. domestic structures, which are amenable to change when existing institutional arrangements are viewed as unresponsive to new policy ideas (see Huntington 1981) and when conditions in the political environment open a ''policy window'' for innovation (Kingdon 1984). An analysis of domestic structures explains how the neoliberal development ideas were

[1] Net transfers of U.S. official development assistance (ODA) rose from $11.4 billion in 2001 to $27.6 billion in 2005 (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee 2006). As a percentage gross national income (GNI), the United States aid commitment doubled from 0.11% to 0.22% during this period.

embedded in the U.S. foreign aid complex, which had evolved incrementally since World War II and whose defining characteristic remains a lack of cohesion. Far from consolidating this array of aid-granting units, as many analysts recommended (see Lancaster and Van Dusen 2005), the aid complex became more dense with the MCC's arrival. Moreover, the new program created a clash of organizational cultures as the corporation's recipient-driven development model diverged from the ''top-down'' approach to aid management long followed by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).[2] In addition to the MCC, whose sole focus is on development, other independent aid-granting agencies include the Peace Corps, the Inter American Foundation, and the African Development Foundation.

In confronting these changes, this study answers previous calls by foreign policy analysts for multilevel explanations that incorporate external and domestic agents of change (see Rosati, Hagan, and Sampson 1994; Risse-Kappen 1994; Cortell and Davis 2000). While ideas regarding international development originated outside the state, the form of the resulting change is best explained by unit-level theories of U.S. public policy and agency design. Similarly, the findings affirm more recent calls for applied research that incorporates elements of rationalist and constructivist theory (see Joachim 2003; Cardenas 2004). As we will find, theoretical synthesis in both respects facilitates a comprehensive understanding of foreign policy behavior in discrete instances that is otherwise unattainable through the use of a single analytic lens.

The study proceeds in four stages. In the first section, I review the scholarly literature on foreign policy change from which I derive a set of hypotheses and alternative explanations related to the case. The second section highlights the principled and causal beliefs that, through disparate networks of policy entrepreneurs, animated the discourse on U.S. foreign aid in the years prior to the policy change. I then examine the conversion of these ideas into a new aid program through mediating domestic structures. The study concludes with a discussion of general findings and their implications, both theoretical and for the future of U.S. aid policy.

Understanding Change in Foreign Policy

As noted previously, systematic attention to change in world politics and foreign policy is of relatively recent vintage. To Robert Gilpin (1981), several factors contributed to scholars' focus on static rather than dynamic analysis, including the methodological limitations of behavioral research, ideological preferences for order, and the persistence of bipolarity during the early Cold War. Those studies that did explore change emphasized systemic patterns such as hegemonic cycles, shifts in the global distribution of wealth, and the growing impact of transnational interdependence and issue-specific regimes (see Holsti, Siverson, and George 1980). While this literature advanced understanding of systemic change, relatively little attention was paid to domestic forces, which were largely dismissed as ''stabilizers'' (Goldmann 1988) that inhibited innovation even amid the accelerating pace of change.

Still, the growing interest in domestic politics provided an opening to scholars seeking to understand the determinants of foreign policy change. Hermann (1990) viewed the *decision process* as crucial to determining the extent to which

[2] Under the system in place at the time of the MCC's creation, USAID managed development programs, disaster relief, and aid to ''failed states;'' the State Department provided funding for diplomatic purposes, HIV/AIDS programs, refugee assistance, post-Communist transitions, and counter-narcotics efforts; the Defense Department distributed security assistance; the Agriculture Department provided food aid; and the Treasury Department oversaw debt relief and contributions to international financial institutions.

the primary agents of change (leaders, bureaucracies, societal actors, or external ''shocks'') gain traction in the policy process. To Thomas Risse-Kappen (1994:187), multilevel interaction was central to this process as ''transnational promoters of foreign policy change must align with domestic coalitions supporting their cause in the 'target state' to make an impact.'' Summing up the emergent literature on the sources of foreign policy change, Joe D. Hagan and Jerel A. Rosati (1994:274) concluded that ''the actual evolution of foreign policy is a function of politics. It is the political interplay between the government, society, and global environment that generates and affects foreign policy continuity and change.''

While instructive to policy theorists, these insights neglected the impact of ideas, or ''broad concepts and basic beliefs that can play a central role in organizing politics and shaping public policy'' (Checkel 1997:5). Ideas, once implanted in the belief system of individual actors, serve as ''road maps'' that ''help determine which of many means will be used to reach desired goals and therefore to help provide actors with strategies with which to further their objectives'' (Goldstein and Keohane 1993:13–14). Ideas privilege some policy choices over others when they are deemed congruent with widely shared principled beliefs, or instrumentally optimal and thus in keeping with causal beliefs.[3] Ideas compatible with both types of beliefs and embraced by a core group of decision makers are especially amenable to foreign policy change.

Principled beliefs, which ''specify criteria for distinguishing right from wrong and just from unjust'' (Goldstein and Keohane 1993:9), relate to behavioral norms that are commonly transnational in scope. A significant body of scholarly literature has focused on the role of transnational norms in altering foreign policies regarding human rights (Risse and Sikkink 1999), regional integration (Schimmelgennig 2001), and the use of military force (Finnemore 2003). Transnational norms, which themselves are generally in flux, may reconstitute national identities, particularly when the emergent norms resonate with widely shared domestic values (Hawkins 2004).

In addition to principled beliefs, shared causal beliefs play an essential role in furthering foreign policy change. Decision makers cannot gain the necessary political leverage to undertake change solely on the basis of normative ideals. They must also present evidence that their proposals will produce the desired results. Research in this area has centered on epistemic communities, defined by Peter Haas (1992:3) as networks of ''professionals with recognized policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area.'' The primary actors in this view are scientists with shared epistemological and methodological orientations whose research findings ''absorb uncertainty'' in the policy process (see Ascher 1983). Taken together, this work reveals that ''the extent to which beliefs matter depends critically on the evidence indicating that the beliefs are plausible'' (Esterling 2004:7).

Epistemic communities, in contrast to transnational regimes and advocacy networks, are likely to engage relatively few private citizens in the policy process. Yet all these societal actors must accommodate domestic structures, whose responsiveness to external pressure reflects variations in levels of development, regime type, and issue area (Katzenstein 1978). More recent research has centered on two aspects of domestic structure: the degree to which state power is centralized and the nature of state-society relations (see Cortell and Davis 2000). Decision making in the United States, with its federal system of government and sharing of powers between the legislative and executive branches, is comparatively

[3] Alexander George (1969) drew a comparable distinction between philosophical and instrumental beliefs in his application of the operational code concept to former Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Whereas his study specified these beliefs at the cognitive level, this analysis considers their diffusion across policy communities.

decentralized, and the broad policy input granted civil society opens the United States government to external pressures, including the penetration of transnational norms and consensual ideas about foreign policy.

Insights regarding organizational behavior shed further light on the impact of domestic structures. It is commonly understood that bureaucracies are conservative in nature and exhibit a modal pattern of stasis and incremental rather than fundamental change (see March and Simon 1958; Downs 1967). Entrenched governmental and parochial interests create ''barriers to exit'' for existing agencies (Mayhew 1974) while the uncertainties and sunk costs related to agency creation render the status quo preferable in the absence of shocks or crises in domestic or global politics (Krasner 1984). When conditions favor policy change, ideas that previously circulated but failed to gain political support rise to the surface (Kingdon 1984) and upon their adoption are embedded in organizational structures and practices (Aberbach and Rockman 2000).

Given that institutional change, however rare, has important consequences for subsequent policy, the design and placement of new government agencies are of central importance. This is ultimately a political process, involving not only the clash of contending ideas but also the respective legal authority and policy interests of bureaucratic actors (Lewis 2003). The compromises among contending stakeholders necessary may lead to sub-optimal agency design and performance (Moe 1989), an outcome that is evident in U.S. national security agencies since their creation after World War II (Zegart 1999). Of further import is the bureaucratic placement of new idea-infused agencies. As Daniel W. Drezner (2000) demonstrated, a paradox results when some new agencies are insulated, or granted structural autonomy, and others are embedded within existing bureaucratic hierarchies. While insulated agencies are more likely to remain true to their founding ideas, they are less likely to achieve their goals in a crowded bureaucratic environment. And while embedded agencies stand a better chance of influencing other units in the hierarchy, they also run the risk that their founding ideals will be compromised.

This review of the literature provides a basis for several hypotheses regarding foreign policy change. Before identifying these hypotheses, it is necessary to specify the type of change to be explored in this study, an important metric given the importance of issue area in the study of foreign policy change. As Hermann (1990) observed, such change occurs on several levels, ranging in order of magnitude from relatively modest *adjustments* in the scope of foreign policies to fundamental shifts in international *orientation*.[4] The object of this study most closely conforms to the intermediate model of *program* change in which ''what is done and how it is done changes, but the purposes for which it is done remain unchanged'' (Hermann 1990:5). In this study, the program change under review targeted the means, not the ends of U.S. aid policy. With this specification in mind, the following hypotheses will be considered in the analysis:

> **Hypothesis 1:** *A convergence of principled and causal beliefs, reflecting ideas not rooted in material interests, will enable the process of foreign policy program change by advancing preferences regarding the ends and means of policy, respectively.*
>
> **Hypothesis 2:** *Two factors relating to U.S. domestic structures will encourage presidential dominance in the process of foreign policy program change: the degree of mobilization among self-seeking domestic interest groups and an enabling political environment for presidential leadership in foreign policy.*

[4] The latter, associated with alterations in the global balance of power, is frequently described as foreign policy *restructuring* (Rosati et al. 1994).

> **Hypothesis 3:** *When idea-infused agency creation accompanies program change in foreign policy, presidents will seek to insulate the new agency rather than risk the subversion of its founding principles through integration in a bureaucratic hierarchy.*

Through the methodology of process-tracing, these hypotheses are tested by identifying the causal factors that led to this program change in U.S. aid policy. As described by Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett (2005:207), ''process tracing forces the investigator to take equifinality into account, that is, to consider the alternative paths through which the outcome could have occurred, and it offers the possibility of mapping out one or more potential causal paths that are consistent with the outcome and the process-tracing evidence in a single case.''[5] Such an approach does not seek to explain recurring patterns of behavior across spatial or longitudinal boundaries, the common objective of large-*n* statistical studies, but instead to reveal underlying causal mechanisms in a specific setting. The findings of this study are intended both to test theories of foreign policy change and to further theory building through the accumulation of historical evidence (see Roberts 1996; Ruggie 1998).

The analysis to follow applies a simple functional model of program change (see Figure 1) that illustrates the linkage between the independent variables (ideas, as reflected in principled and causal beliefs) and the dependent variable (program change in U.S. foreign policy). Whereas widely shared principled beliefs mobilize actors on behalf of desired policy goals, causal beliefs are more closely linked to the means devised to achieve those goals. Domestic structures collectively constitute a mediating variable that, under favorable political conditions, reconcile the policy ideas with existing foreign policy interests to make change possible.

The creation of the MCC is particularly suitable to test these propositions. The case represents a fundamental strategic change in the United States government's approach to international development. The principled and causal ideas

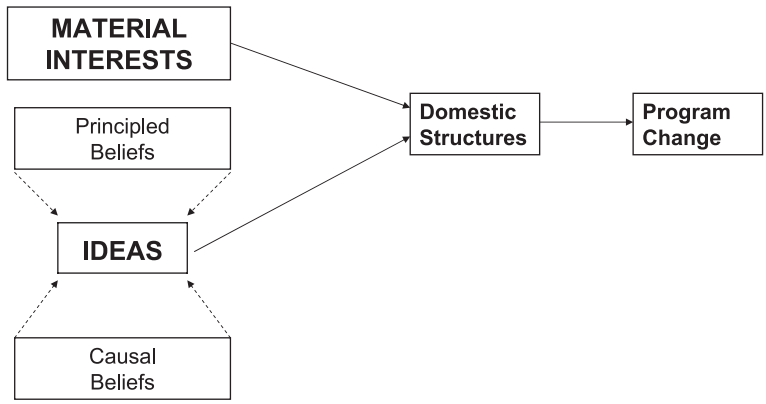

Fig 1. Program Change in Foreign Policy: A Functional Model.

[5] Evidence of these causal relationships is derived from an examination of government documents and secondary sources as well as semi-structured interviews with government officials who participated in the MCCs design and implementation. These interviews, conducted in the spring of 2006, included Paul Applegarth, the first chief executive officer of the MCC; Andrew Natsios, the USAID administrator during this period; and three officials of the corporation: Richard A. Morford, managing director for donor and multilateral relations; Bradley C. Parks, development policy officer; and Christopher A. Walker, associate director for international relations.

animating this change are clearly evident in the societal discourse that preceded the decision and in the founding statements and procedures of the new aid corporation. The program change required the allocation of new resources and created new criteria for the allocation of official development assistance (ODA), producing new bilateral aid relationships on a sustained basis.[6] More generally, this case is suitable for scholarly analysis given that the policy outcome deviated from the modal pattern of institutional continuity not only in foreign aid but in U.S. foreign policy more generally.

Finally, it is helpful to consider how rationalist theories at the system and state levels of analysis offer alternative explanations for this change in U.S. foreign policy. To structural realists (e.g., Waltz 1979), the change must be viewed in the context of dynamic interstate power asymmetries. Liberal institutionalism (see Stein 1982), another systemic theory in the rationalist tradition, would interpret this change as an effort by the United States government to enhance intergovernmental cooperation in other issue areas. Both explanations, however, are inadequate. Although the September 2001 terrorist attacks heightened the United States government's sense of vulnerability, they did not disrupt the unipolar balance of world power that persisted since the Cold War. The liberal interpretation is also deficient given the unilateral thrust of U.S. foreign policy during this period. And while many aspects of the new aid program brought the United States in greater compliance with the standards of the development aid regime (Wood 1986), even if fully funded the MCC would still leave the United States among the stingiest aid donors as a percentage of national income.[7]

The explanatory shortcomings of these system-level theories require opening the ''black box'' of domestic politics. Even here, the two prominent rationalist theories fail to explain this change in U.S. aid policy. Whereas pluralists would emphasize the mobilization of a potent domestic interest group in favor of program change (see Truman 1951), advocates of the bureaucratic politics paradigm would interpret the outcome as determined by the self-interested preferences of the dominant agencies (see Allison 1971). Although the influence of religious as well as secular development groups was considerable, as described in the next section, the resulting institutional model—an independent government corporation—was opposed by the primary NGO coalition representing both groups engaged in the process. And although months of interagency debate preceded the new aid program's institutional placement, the structural choice was made by central decision makers in the White House, not by bureaucratic managers (Brainard, Graham, Radelet, Purvis, and Smith 2003; Nowels 2003).

Taken together, both state-level theories fail to explain this case because they suffer from a restricted conception of the state as a passive arena of competition among societal and bureaucratic actors. As we will find, government elites had their own ideas about international development that cannot solely be attributed to material self-interests. The same elites also possessed sufficient autonomy in the policy process to bring those ideas into institutional form, a pattern that is similar to other cases of U.S. foreign economic policy (Ikenberry, Lake, and Mastanduno 1988).

Among foreign policy issue areas, development aid is particularly elusive for analysts who are interested in discerning the motivations of state action. On the

[6] According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), ODA includes ''grants or loans to countries and territories…which are (a) undertaken by the official sector; (b) with promotion of economic development and welfare as the main objective, and (c) at concessional financial terms'' (see http://www.oecd.org/glossary).

[7] In 2001, the year preceding the MCA proposal, the United States ranked last among major aid donors in the share of its national income spent on official development assistance. The United States level of 0.11% was half the average level of 0.22% ODA/GNI among all major donors (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee 2003:242–43).

surface, such grants and concessional loans reflect altruistic values regarding the need to improve the living standards of distressed foreign populations. Such values, however, do not preclude the imposition of donor self-interests, which at minimum are served by the more prosperous and stable world order presumably facilitated by development assistance. More commonly, donors expect tangible economic, security, or political benefits in exchange for aid, suggesting that power and interests cannot be excluded from analyses of foreign aid (Hook 1995). Still, a sense of ''moral vision'' (Lumsdaine 1993) is evident in the correspondence of domestic societal values and governing arrangements across donor states and their transfers of development aid (Breuning and Ishiyama 2003).

Ideational Convergence and the Millennium Challenge Account

For most of its history, the United States had no formal program in place to dispense foreign aid. To the extent that Americans provided economic assistance to citizens and governments overseas, they did so largely in the form of disaster relief or support for private missionary groups. To many Americans, foreign aid violated the same principles of individual responsibility that later fueled public resistance to domestic welfare programs. Ideas about foreign aid changed and U.S. foreign policy in the aftermath of World War II. Geopolitical rather than developmental concerns led U.S. officials to initiate economic aid programs associated with the Marshall Plan and President Truman's Point Four proposals (Breuning 2003).

Upon its creation in 1961, USAIDs development mission was overtaken by U.S. foreign policy interests that prevailed despite the agency's rhetorical embrace of ''basic human needs'' in the 1970s and ''sustainable development'' in the 1990s. Congressional earmarks and the tying of aid to domestic procurement further distracted the agency, which by the end of the century was committed to more than 30 separate objectives, many of which were remotely linked to poverty relief.[8] This ambiguity ensured that USAID would remain a target of public and elite criticism.[9] Lacking sufficient domestic support, USAID suffered cutbacks during the 1990s that amounted to 25% in real terms and 50% as a share of U.S. national income (Radelet 2003:108). New ideas were required to revive the aid program.

Principled Beliefs: Religious Groups and the Aid Regime

Principled beliefs about global poverty reduction figured prominently in the United States government's embrace of development aid in the new millennium. External pressure for this shift originated from two sources, one largely domestic and the other transnational in scope. The first of these, U.S.-based religious groups, reversed a history of hostility toward foreign aid and emerged as forceful advocates of poverty relief in the 1990s. The second source of external pressure, the global development aid regime, gained new momentum and concessions from the United States, which had previously played an adversarial role within the regime. In both cases, policy advocates relied upon normative appeals that framed greater development aid as a morally appropriate standard of behavior among affluent states (Busby 2007).

[8] The functions of U.S. development aid are detailed in more than 200 pages of the most recently amended version of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Just $1.3 billion of USAIDs $10 billion budget in fiscal year 2002 was devoted directly to development concerns (United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2003).

[9] Foreign aid consistently ranked as the least popular federal spending programs in the 1990s, although public disregard for aid was skewed by widespread misperceptions about the size and scale of the aid program (Kull and Destler 1999).

The 1990s witnessed a surge in foreign policy activism among American religious groups, whose focus on public policy had previously centered on domestic social issues such as abortion, gay rights, and school prayer (Martin 1999). Debates over such issues reflected deeply held religious beliefs and moral values, which ''offer ultimate perspectives, broad criteria, motives, inspirations, sensitivities, warnings, and moral limits'' (Bennett 1966:36). Principled beliefs animated foreign policy discourse on a variety of post-Cold War foreign policy issues, particularly the persecution of Christians by foreign governments. The activism of faith-based NGOs concerned with global development and human rights also increased in the 1990s as groups such as World Vision and Bread for the World created transnational links that brought them into direct contact with victims of poverty (see Buss and Herman 2003). Faith-based NGOs were instrumental at the grass-roots level because ''churches, temples, mosques, and other places of worship [are] focal points for the communities they serve'' (Naidoo 2000).

Two global aid initiatives demonstrated the ability of moral appeals by religious groups to spur government action. The first, a worldwide campaign for debt relief known as Jubilee 2000, prompted industrialized states to pledge more than $20 billion in debt relief to countries in extreme poverty. The United States government had previously been reluctant to provide multilateral support for debt relief through the Debt Relief Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). Faith groups from several denominations united around the idea that debt obligations, which deprived poor states of needed funds for health and education programs and other vital services, amounted to a moral crisis that demanded external intervention. Individual norm entrepreneurs also invoked religious principles to generate aid commitments from the United States government. Personal appeals to members of Congress by the televangelist Pat Robertson and Bono, the leader of the rock band U2, persuaded U.S. leaders to commit $435 million in debt relief.[10]

The second aid initiative concerned economic support to victims of HIV/AIDS in the developing world. As in the case of debt relief, the United States government was a late entry to this global campaign. Christian conservatives again mobilized and formed allied with African-American NGOs that had previously, and unsuccessfully, sought greater support from the Republican-controlled Congress (Burkhalter 2004). In February 2002, a global AIDS conference hosted by the Christian relief organization Samaritan's Purse drew leaders of more than 800 Catholic and Protestant churches along with a variety of government leaders. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, who attended the Prescription for Hope conference, later cosponsored with Helms a $500-million supplement to USAID's budget for HIV/AIDS programs. In January 2003, Bush announced an Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief that pledged $15 billion in funding over 5 years, of which $1 billion was designated for the global fund.[11]

Principled ideas about foreign aid commonly invoked the biblical story of the ''good Samaritan.'' Bush (White House, 2001), a born-again Christian, declared in his inaugural address, ''Many in our country do not know the pain of poverty, but we can listen to those who do. And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.'' U. S. Senator Jesse Helms (2002:B7) used the same imagery in calling for greater HIV/AIDS funding: ''I know that, like the Samaritan traveling

[10] The tipping point in the lobbying effort occurred when Bono met with Sen. Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the most outspoken congressional critic of foreign aid. Bono's framing of debt relief in the context of biblical Scripture so impressed the senator that Helms, a Southern Baptist, was reportedly moved to tears (Traub 2005; Busby 2007).

[11] The United States government appropriated $13.5 billion between Fiscal Years 2004 and 2007 for this effort, which departed from past practice by extending beyond the treatment of HIV/AIDS to include education and prevention programs (Salaam-Blyther 2007).

from Jerusalem to Jericho, we cannot turn away when we see our fellow man in need.'' This theological framing of aid resonated with faith-based advocates and, more broadly, with the sense of religiosity in U.S. culture.[12]

Alongside this heightened activism by church groups, a parallel process of normative suasion originated from the development aid regime, whose founding principles included a shared concern and sense of obligation among industrialized states toward the majority of the world's population living in poverty.[13] The regime, including intergovernmental organizations and development NGOs, established new momentum a decade after the Cold War that culminated in the September 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit. Nearly every government attended the conference and approved eight Millennium Development Goals with accompanying measures of progress to be achieved by 2015.[14] The Millennium Declaration acknowledged that ''responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as international threats to peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally'' (United Nations 2000).

While the Millennium Summit was not the first to identify explicit measures of development progress and timetables for higher aid levels, the event demonstrated renewed commitment to the aid regime after a decade of post-Cold War drift. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the regime's institutional home, had routinely shamed the United States government for its failure to meet the regime's standards during this period.[15] The Bush administration, whose foreign policy agenda included U.S. detachment from a variety of multilateral commitments, made a conspicuous exception in the case of the millennium goals. The pledge by other industrialized countries to increase their aid commitments produced tangible results, as all major donors recorded increases in ODA spending as a share of national income between 2001 and 2005 (see Table 1).

Evidence of the aid regime's importance to the Bush administration is also found in the timing of its MCC initiative, which coincided with a March 2002 UN-sponsored conference in Monterrey, Mexico. Fifty-one heads of state

Table 1. Development Aid as a Percentage of National Income, 2001–2005: Top Five Donors and DAC Averages

Donor	*2001*	*2003*	*2005*
France	0.32	0.40	0.47
Germany	0.27	0.28	0.36
Japan	0.23	0.20	0.28
United Kingdom	0.32	0.34	0.47
United States	0.11	0.15	0.22
DAC Average	0.22	0.25	0.33

Source: Organization for Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee, *Development Co-operation Report* (various years).

[12] Americans ranked first among citizens in believing in a ''personal God'' in a 43-country survey conducted in the early 1990s (Inglehart, Basenez, and Moreno 1998).

[13] Quantitative standards for ODA include a ODA/GNI level of 0.7%. Among other standards, donor states are urged to provide grants rather than loans, avoid tying aid to domestic procurement, and to favor recipients suffering from extreme poverty.

[14] Among other goals, participating states pledged to reach the regime's long-standing ODA/GNI threshold of 0.7% by 2015, which would increase ODA flows from $53 billion in 2002 to $175 billion (Sachs 2005:218).

[15] The DAC's 1998 quadrennial review of the United States, the last published before the MCA initiative, made this case bluntly: ''The peer community of donors sees the current level of American aid as inadequate to bring to bear in the world the evident capacities of the United States development agencies and American society more widely'' (OECD 1998:1).

attended the Conference on Financing for Development, which was initially proposed by the General Assembly in 1999 amid growing gaps between the world's richest and poorest states. While urging developing countries to stimulate economic growth through market reforms, the Monterrey Consensus declared that foreign aid ''plays an essential role as a complement to other sources of financing for development, especially in those countries with the least capacity to attract private direct investment'' (United Nations 2002:9). As the next section describes, the principled beliefs underlying the United States policy change on foreign aid were reinforced by the causal claims of prominent development economists regarding the most effective means of delivering foreign aid.

New Thinking in Development Economics

Amid the changes in principled beliefs regarding foreign aid, the 1990s also witnessed a period of intellectual ferment in the field of development economics. The collapse of Soviet communism in 1991 was widely interpreted as an affirmation of neoliberal economic principles that privileged private markets over state intervention domestically (monetary and fiscal policy) and in global trade and private investment (foreign economic policy). Market reforms in Eastern Europe occurred alongside similar reforms in Latin America where leaders had previously turned, with limited success, to nationalized industries, import-substitution, and currency devaluation in order to improve living standards. While neoliberal ideas could not be divorced from normative values, they influenced policy by positing causal relationships between government actions and desired outcomes. In serving this instrumental function, economic ideas bolstered the claims of state decision makers and the legitimacy of their policy preferences.

Such political responsiveness to economic ideas was hardly unprecedented (see Hall 1989). Prominent development paradigms related to economic modernization informed U.S. policies in the aftermath of World War II (see Rostow 1960). After it became clear that most developing countries were not attracting the required infusions of private capital, advocates for North-South economic cooperation called for greatly increased aid flows. The global aid regime, responding also to the plight of post-colonial African states in the early 1960s, coalesced during this period. Though a founding member of this regime, the United States still reserved most aid funds for foreign policy self-interests, urging developing countries to ''grow'' their way out of poverty through market reforms and openness to foreign trade (Heilbroner and Milberg 1995).

Establishing a causal link between macroeconomic policies and economic growth was a central concern of development economists in the 1990s and several studies offered evidence that properly implemented market reforms hastened growth rates in developing countries (Easterly and Rebelo 1993; Fischer 1993). At the same time, research on foreign assistance reinforced earlier findings that most aid flows had little or no impact on recipients' economic growth (see Boone 1996). These findings supported the arguments of foreign aid critics in the United States and other major donor countries, all of which reduced aid allocations relative to national income in the 1990s. A rapid increase in foreign direct investments, albeit to a narrow range of relatively affluent developing countries, fueled political opposition to foreign aid.

Advocates of U.S. development aid received a needed lift in the late 1990s from the international development epistemic community. A study by World Bank economists Craig Burnside and David Dollar (1997) offered evidence of an empirical link between aid flows and economic growth among developing countries that had previously undertaken successful political and economic reforms. Their study of 56 aid recipients between 1970 and 1993 found that, whereas aid had little or no impact on growth in countries that restricted trade, accumulated

budget deficits, and enacted inflationary monetary policies, foreign aid to states with ''sound'' economic policies stimulated economic growth and reduced poverty rates. Specifically, their model found that such policies, with other variables held constant, raised the mean economic growth rate of recipient countries between 1.1% and 1.4%.

These findings provided the empirical foundation for a World Bank (1998:2) report which concluded that development aid ''works in a good policy environment'' and suggested that ''with sound economic management, 1% of GDP in assistance translates into a 1% decline in poverty and a similar decline in infant mortality. In a weak environment, however, money has much less impact… Improvements in economic institutions and policies in the developing world are the key to a quantum leap in poverty reduction.'' A replication of the study by Burnside and Dollar (2000) found that the economies of developing countries with sound policies but low aid inflows grew at an average of rate of 2.2% during this period, while economic growth in countries with similar policies and relatively large aid inflows averaged 3.7%. In another analysis, Paul Collier and David Dollar (2002) presented additional evidence that increased development aid stimulated economic growth in recipient countries with sound policies at three times the level of those that had not enacted market reforms.

The research findings found favor within the United States government on two levels. First, they offered an empirically based justification for the selective allocation of development assistance. To development economist Ross Levine (quoted in Eviatar 2003), the findings ''gave a reason for foreign aid and a strategy for giving it out.'' In this manner the findings affirmed the United States government's emphasis, in IMF and World Bank deliberations, on market reforms as a catalyst for economic growth, a central presumption of aid conditionalities associated with the Washington consensus (see Williamson 1990). More generally, the findings resonated with U.S. domestic values that highlighted the importance of individual liberty and private enterprise (see Hartz 1955).

While of direct interest to a relatively narrow segment of the public, the research findings formed the basis of supportive media commentaries in the weeks prior to Bush's announcement of the MCC. A February 9, 2002, editorial in *The Washington Post* (2002:A26) embraced the findings, arguing that ''if aid were targeted more selectively at poor countries with good policies, its effectiveness could be improved further.'' Similar arguments appeared on March 11 in the *Financial Times* (Beattie 2002) and on March 16 in *The Economist* (2002). Both articles, whose publication coincided with Bush's MCC proposal, cited the academic studies that supported the neoliberal development model. The same findings were also cited by proponents of performance-based aid programs in the United Kingdom and Canada.[16]

For President Bush, the International Conference on Financing for Development required a ''deliverable,'' or a major policy statement that would attract considerable attention. The new aid program served this purpose for Bush, who used the Monterrey conference on March 22 to make his case for the MCA before other world leaders and a global news media: ''The lesson of our time is clear: When nations close their markets and opportunity is horded by a privileged few no amount of development aid is ever enough. When nations respect their people, open markets, invest in better health and education, every dollar of

[16] The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (2000:87–88) used the findings to support its argument that ''development assistance can contribute to poverty reduction in countries with sound policies.'' Two years later, Canada's International Development Agency (2002:12) cited the studies' ''compelling evidence that good governance and a sound policy environment are the most important determinants of aid effectiveness and development progress.''

aid, every dollar of trade revenue and domestic capital, is used more effectively. We must tie greater aid to political and legal and economic reforms'' (White House 2002a). The model proposed by the Bush administration, a new aid program unburdened by domestic or geopolitical self-interests, ''would be the closest to a development purist's blueprint for aid that the United States has ever attempted'' (Brainard 2003:155).

The Policy Window for Change

None of the principled and causal beliefs highlighted above dictated the specific program change examined in this study, the creation of an independent aid corporation. While normative values and consensual knowledge about the most effective means of aid delivery paved the way for policy innovation, one must turn to domestic structures to understand their manifestation in U.S. governing institutions. It is here that power and interests, the core elements of rationalist theory, contributed to the policy outcome.

Of primary concern in this respect is the United States policy-making process, whose defining features are the sharing of executive and legislative powers and the variable policy impact of societal groups depending on the material benefits at stake for them. These features of the policy process pertain directly to the creation of government agencies: whereas Congress approaches agency design ''from the parochial perspective of narrow reelection interests,'' the president adopts ''a broader perspective derived from unique constitutional responsibilities'' (Lewis 2003:22). In this respect, agency design in foreign policy, with its global orientation and weaker material ties to interest groups than domestic policy, is more likely to be driven by the president than Congress, a pattern affirmed by Amy B. Zegart (1999) in her study of U.S. national security agencies.

This finding, however, begs questions regarding the design of other foreign policy agencies, including those charged with the allocation of U.S. foreign aid. As noted earlier, domestic groups have substantial stakes in aid programs that are tied to domestic procurement, and members of Congress are predictably responsive to societal pressure on behalf of these aid programs. For their part, presidents consistently support large-scale aid transfers to strategically vital allies even when the aid has little to do with poverty relief or international development. The failure of the United States to play a leadership role in the global aid regime can be attributed to this dilemma, which is rooted in the material interests of domestic political actors and the state.

Viewed in this context, the proposed program change in U.S. foreign aid offered a break from the past that reflected the government's acceptance of recipient-oriented aid giving as a standard of appropriateness in foreign policy. While domestic groups, primarily development and faith-based NGOs driven by principled beliefs, mobilized on behalf of more development aid, the groups' lack of material self-interests in the new program limited the political salience of this issue for legislators. By the same token, the causal beliefs of development economists energized members of Congress to a lesser extent than the president since the policy prescription called for recipient rather than U.S. control of aid programs and benefits. As the caretaker of national rather than parochial concerns, and compelled by reformulated principled and causal beliefs regarding development aid, the White House was in a politically advantageous position to set the agenda on this issue and to take the initiative in carrying out the program change.[17]

[17] In this sense the president's lead role on this initiative is analogous to U.S. trade policy, in which irresistible parochial interests led Congress to defer to the executive branch in upholding the principles regarding open markets that were advocated but routinely violated by the United States government.

Still, the ideational convergence described above required that a ''policy window'' be opened for the new development ideas, which had been circulating for several years in the ''primeval soup'' of U.S. public policy (Kingdon 1984). Two developments linked to U.S. domestic structures opened this window. First, the highly contested 2000 elections not only brought Bush to the White House but initiated a period of unified government, led by the Republican Party, which provided an enabling environment for change across a range of policy areas. As anticipated by the scholarly literature noted above, the White House initiated the change when, in the summer of 2001, Bush convened an interagency task force to consider a new initiative for the United States government to announce at the March 2002 development conference in Monterrey, Mexico.

The second development, the September 2001 terrorist attacks, pushed the policy window wide open. In proposing the MCA 6 months later, Bush (White House, 2002a) argued that ''persistent poverty and oppression can lead to hopelessness and despair. And when governments fail to meet the most basic needs of their people, these failed states can become havens for terror.'' The president's National Security Strategy (White House, 2002b), adopted in September 2002, identified development as one of three ''pillars'' of national security, along with defense and diplomacy, and looked toward development aid to ''disrupt and destroy terrorist organizations by…diminishing the underlying conditions that spawn terrorism.'' The same view was expressed a month later by U.S. national security adviser Condoleezza Rice (2002): ''We have seen how poor states can become weak or even failed states, vulnerable to hijacking by terrorist networks, with potentially catastrophic consequences.'' While the terrorist attacks did not fundamentally alter the global balance of power, they created a politically salient pretext for policy change.

The MCA task force was led by two political appointees close to the president: deputy national security adviser Gary Edson and Robin Cleveland of the Office of Management and Budget, the latter of whom was charge with ''ensuring that the existing bureaucratic machinery of the United States government…did not stifle the implementation of an innovative initiative'' (Cronin 2007:2). While the task force did not initially consider institutional changes to the United States aid complex, its members agreed that a ''no-nonsense business approach'' to foreign aid would form a centerpiece of the proposal and that aid calculations would be based upon the recipients' past record, not their promises of future economic and political reforms.

The task force considered two options for embedding the program change in governing structures: bureaucratic integration and insulation (see Table 2). The first option would place the account within an existing government entity, either a cabinet department or USAID. This choice offered the prospect of greater efficiency across the aid complex through the pooling of resources and expertise; and greater coherence among aid agencies, which would be better able to

Table 2. MCA Institutional Options and Calculations

Options	*Advantages*	*Disadvantages*
Integration (Placement within existing agency)	Potential spread of founding principles across agencies Coherence and efficiency	Potential capture by dominant unit
Insulation (Creation of independent agency)	''Purity'' of mission; link to founding principles Autonomy and flexibility Organizational cohesion and morale	Increased fragmentation of aid complex Sunk costs of agency creation Potential isolation in foreign policy process

''speak with one voice'' in a single administrative home. In addition, the MCA's neoliberal development ideas would have greater potential to spread to adjacent administrative units. This choice was generally favored by legislators, including Rep. Henry Hyde (United States Congress, House Committee on International Relations 2003:3) chairman of the House International Relations Committee, who argued that an ''empowered USAID, not more bureaucracy, red tape, and foreign aid balkanization, is what we need to make MCA a success.''[18] The same view was advanced in congressional hearings by Interaction, a coalition of development and faith-based NGOs, which recommended a ''semi-autonomous office'' for the account in USAID (United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2003:56).

Bureaucratic integration carried its own risks. Rather than spreading outward, the MCA's founding principles could succumb to the divergent values, organizational culture, and standard operating procedures of adjacent units. If placed under the State Department, for example, the MCA's founding values could be corrupted by U.S. foreign policy self-interests. Under USAID, the MCA would be vulnerable to the same legislative earmarks that had plagued the agency's developmental mission for decades. The account, designed to provide recipients autonomy in their development strategies and programs, could also be overtaken by USAID, whose staff had long managed aid projects through centralized control in Washington and a network of overseas field offices.

Under the second option, the United States government would create an independent agency to disburse development aid. By being structurally insulated, the new agency would be free to pursue its founding principles without the parochial interference that had previously diverted a substantial share of bilateral aid transfers. Employees of an idea-infused ''missionary'' agency (Drezner 2000) would presumably find this a stimulating environment, enhancing the prospects for recruitment and morale.[19] Speaking for the administration in congressional hearings, Under Secretary of State Alan Larson (United States Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 2003:94) argued that

> [a] new institution is the best hope to bring about this sea change in our current approach. The existing agencies that might administer the MCA—State and USAID—both have many of other bureaucratic mandates and priorities. The MCA needs flexibility to carry out its innovative mandate and should start with a clean slate to give it the best change to succeed and show that this approach works.

The MCA's bureaucratic insulation, however, would further fragment the aid complex, creating new dangers of redundancy and interagency competition that had long frustrated aid recipients and incited domestic critics of U.S. foreign aid. The sunk costs of agency creation, with the attending high levels of uncertainty, would also have to be borne by the government. Insulation would also leave the MCA in danger of isolation, reducing its capacity to influence other aid agencies. As Drezner (2000:717) observed, ''Insulation and the concomitant development of a strong organizational culture limit the influence of new ideas upon the other bureaucratic actors in foreign policy.... Sufficient difference in bureaucratic culture lead agencies to distrust the ability of other institutions to make any contribution to foreign policy.''

[18] A majority of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee called for the MCA to be housed within the State Department. The amendment was later dropped under pressure from the White House and its legislative allies on the committee.

[19] Missionary institutions may be distinguished from others in two ways: they advance a ''coherent set of preferences over means and ends,'' and they resist ''additional normative or material goals in order to avoid value conflicts'' (Drezner 2000:735. See also Bendor, Taylor, and Van Gaalen 1987).

These real and potential drawbacks were viewed by the White House as less formidable than the virtues of bureaucratic insulation. Backed by a partisan majority in Congress that overcame the resistance of many Republican members, the Bush administration succeeded in winning approval for its chosen institutional home for the account, the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Majorities in both houses approved the White House design in authorizing legislation passed by the House of Representatives on December 8 and the Senate on January 22, 2004. Bush signed the legislation as part of an omnibus spending bill the following day, and the MCC came to life.[20]

The MCC codified its founding ideas through the adoption of 18 criteria to be used by staff members in considering aid applications. The economic criteria included non-inflationary monetary policies, curbs on government spending, and favorable credit ratings for foreign investment. These criteria, reflecting the MCC's model of development, originated from like-minded intergovernmental organizations and NGOs. The World Bank and IMF, for example, set the standards for fiscal and monetary policy, and the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, provided criteria for open trade policies. As for the political criteria, the standards for democratic reform were established by Freedom House, a Washington-based NGO whose conception of democracy, limited largely to individual liberty rather than extending to socioeconomic equality, was favored by the White House.[21]

The MCC's founding ideas assumed institutional form in two other ways. First, the ''foundation model'' recommended by the White House and approved by Congress envisioned a relatively small staff of U.S.-based development specialists whose role would be limited to considering aid applications and processing the transfer of funds. Recipients would decide for themselves what projects to propose for funding, how to implement funded programs, and how to monitor their results.[22] The unilateral nature of the MCC also figured prominently in the new aid program, which did not require the pooling of funds with other aid donors or coordination with multilateral agencies. By going it alone on this initiative, a pattern consistent with other aspects of the Bush administration's foreign policy, the U.S. government could ensure that its development model found expression in the new aid program.

Conclusion

This examination of the program change in U.S. foreign aid policy confirms the hypotheses advanced earlier. The change cannot adequately be explained without reference to the principled and causal beliefs regarding international development that were widely circulated through distinctive societal pathways prior to the administration's coming to power. These beliefs, reflecting ideas exogenous to the policy process, were filtered through domestic structures that, given an enabling political environment and the lack of mobilized parochial self-interests on this issue, granted the executive branch substantial freedom to embed the beliefs in a new foreign policy program. And the president, seeking to ensure that these

[20] The Millennium Challenge Act of 2003, Public Law 108–109, Division D, Title VI of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2004. Seventy-four countries with per capita incomes less than $1,415 became eligible for MCC funding in its first year (fiscal year 2004). This level increased to $3,465 by the third year, increasing the pool of potential recipients to 116 (see Tarnoff 2007).

[21] Applicants would have to score above the median on half of the performance indicators established by the MCC; scores on government corruption would be ''pass-fail,'' meaning that low scores would disqualify the countries from further consideration.

[22] The development projects commonly funded by the MCC included the construction of transportation networks, agricultural programs, improved sanitation, and public administration. See http://www.mcc.gov/countries/index.php for an elaboration.

beliefs would determine policy outcomes on a sustained basis, chose to implement the program through the creation of a new agency that would be insulated from interference by other bureaucratic actors. As an institutional repository for its neoliberal founding principles, the MCC endures despite subsequent research findings that challenged the empirical link between performance-based aid allocations and economic growth (see Easterly, Levine, and Roodman 2004).

This structural choice left ''no single focal point in the United States government with the requisite expertise to provide programmatic leadership and policy direction in promoting international development'' (Lancaster and Van Dusen 2005:3). In place of a centralized aid institution, myriad government agencies continue to provide assistance in keeping with their institutional missions, many of which overlap or pursue contradictory outcomes. The aid complex, an evolutionary by-product of multiple decisions made by successive presidential administrations, legislative sessions, and bureaucratic actors, will ensure that the developmental mission of U.S. foreign aid will remain, as Zegart (1999) observed in regard to national security agencies, ''flawed by design.''

While questions of implementation are beyond the scope of this study, the program's early experience suggests that the MCCs insulated status may create vulnerabilities for the agency. First, both the administration's timetable for funding and administration proved overly ambitious, as the MCCs lean staff could not generate or approve aid compacts at a pace that produced the ''transformative'' impact envisioned by the White House.[23] Only 12 compacts, amounting to $3.5 billion, were approved 3 years after eligible countries were identified in May 2004, and a small fraction of this total was actually disbursed.[24] Second, the MCCs insulation predictably exacerbated coordination problems across the aid complex. Of the 23 countries identified as eligible for MCC funding in the corporation's first 3 years, USAID maintained missions in 17 (Nowels 2006:26). This lack of coherence, combined with the budgetary strains imposed by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, left the MCC exposed to congressionally imposed funding restrictions that further reduced its impact on international development.

A single case study can only be suggestive of broader patterns of foreign policy change, and further scholarly analysis is needed to support generalizations that apply to other countries and issue areas. Still, the findings suggest that, while material interests affect foreign policy choices in multiple issue areas, these choices are responsive to evolving norms regarding appropriate behavior in foreign policy. This diffusion of transnational norms is discernible even in the policy process of the world's predominant state. ''Powerful people representing powerful states can understand desirable political order in a wide variety of ways,'' Martha Finnemore (2003:140) concluded in her study of changing norms regarding the use of force. ''More territory is no longer a marker of state success or state greatness. This was not always true, and material facts alone cannot explain this change in valued ends or appropriate means.''

As the current study finds, this lesson extends to the normative context surrounding North-South economic relations and poverty relief. Indeed, the findings suggest a broadening of national interests to include transnational obligations formerly dismissed by assertions of state sovereignty. The impact of norm entrepreneurs, either as individuals or in the form of principled issue networks (Sikkink 1993), is critical to this heightened acceptance of global responsibility.

[23] The modest scale of the initial aid compacts left the United States as the largest aid donor to only two of the first six countries (Georgia and Honduras) that signed compacts with the MCC. An increase in the size of the MCC's staff to more than 200 by fiscal year 2006 was designed to increase the number and size of aid compacts.

[24] The recipients of these first 12 compacts included, in chronological order: Madagascar ($110 million); Honduras ($215 million); Cape Verde ($110 million); Mozambique ($507 million); Georgia ($295 million); Benin ($307 million); Armenia ($236 million); Nicaragua ($175 million); Ghana ($547 million); El Salvador ($461 million); Mali ($461 million); and Vanuatu ($67 million).

Attention to the foreign policy decision process (Hermann 1990), meanwhile, illustrates how evolving beliefs as well as enduring state interests are accommodated by domestic structures. The state, possessing sufficient autonomy to advance its own foreign policy ideas, makes independent decisions regarding the means of achieving foreign policy goals that do not directly serve societal or bureaucratic self-interests. The conditions under which such action occurs, however, are tightly bound by the prevailing political environment that reflects temporally specific governmental power balances and pressures emanating from overseas. In an enabling environment, states find creative ways to convert their ideas into new programs and governing institutions.

Cross-national applications of these dynamics in domestic structure can further ascertain the extent to which the outcome of this multilevel decision process can be compared to other states and issue areas. The interaction of social structures and agents of change is difficult to gauge empirically, as are its consequences for policy in specific instances. Also elusive is the staying power of idea-infused policy changes, which are subject to reversal by subsequent developments in the normative or political environment. In any event, such eclectic inquiry is essential to enhance our understanding of foreign policy change given the profound implications of such change for subsequent state action in world politics.

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